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4. An isolated crystal of a Fc-C $\epsilon$ 3/C $\epsilon$ 4 region of a human IgE antibody.
  5. A method to produce the isolated crystal of Claim 4, said method comprising vapor diffusion.

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- 5           6.       An isolated Fc-C $\epsilon$ 3/C $\epsilon$ 4 protein selected from the group consisting of: (a)  
a protein consisting of SEQ ID NO:2; and (b) a homologous protein that is structurally  
homologous to a protein of (a), wherein said homologous protein binds to a Fc $\epsilon$ RI $\alpha$   
protein.
7.       A nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleic acid sequence that encodes  
10   said isolated Fc-C $\epsilon$ 3/C $\epsilon$ 4 protein of Claim 6.
8.       A recombinant molecule comprising the nucleic acid sequence of Claim 7.
9.       A recombinant virus comprising the nucleic acid sequence of Claim 7.
10.      A recombinant cell comprising the nucleic acid sequence of Claim 7.
11.      A method to produce a protein comprising culturing the recombinant cell  
15   of Claim 10.

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- 5           12.     A method to identify a compound that inhibits the binding between an IgE antibody and a FcεRIα protein, said method comprising using a three-dimensional model of a Fc-Cε3/Cε4 region of a human IgE to identify said compound, wherein said model substantially represents the atomic coordinates specified in a Table selected from the group consisting of Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3.
- 10           13.     An inhibitory compound identified in accordance with the method of Claim 12.
14.     A therapeutic composition comprising the inhibitory compound of Claim 13.
15.     A method to protect an animal from allergy, said method comprising
- 15     administering to said animal the inhibitory compound of Claim 13.

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5           16.     A method to improve a function of an antibody comprising a Fc-C $\epsilon$ 3/C $\epsilon$ 4 region, said improved function being selected from the group consisting of increased stability, increased affinity for an IgE binding domain of a Fc $\epsilon$ RI $\alpha$  protein, altered substrate specificity, and increased solubility, said method comprising:

10                 (a)     analyzing a three-dimensional model substantially representing the atomic coordinates specified in a Table selected from the group consisting of Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 to identify at least one amino acid of the Fc-C $\epsilon$ 3/C $\epsilon$ 4 region represented by said model which if replaced by said identified amino acid(s) improves at least one of said functions of said Fc-C $\epsilon$ 3/C $\epsilon$ 4 region; and

15                 (b)     replacing said identified amino acid(s) to produce a mutein having at least one of said improved functions.

20           17.     A mutein produced by the method of Claim 16, wherein said mutein has an improved function compared to a Fc-C $\epsilon$ 3/C $\epsilon$ 4 protein comprising amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2, wherein said improved function is selected from the group consisting of increased stability compared to the stability of a human IgE Fc region comprising amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2, increased affinity for a Fc $\epsilon$ RI $\alpha$  protein compared to the Fc $\epsilon$ RI $\alpha$  affinity of a human IgE Fc region comprising amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2, altered substrate affinity compared to the affinity for human Fc $\epsilon$ RI $\alpha$  of a human IgE Fc region comprising amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2, and increased solubility compared to the solubility of a human IgE Fc region comprising amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2.

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- 10           19.     The polypeptide of Claim 18, wherein said composition is selected from the group consisting of a linker between Cε2 and Cε3, a BC loop of Cε3, a DE loop of Cε3, and a FG loop of Cε3, a loop or strand defining the interdomain groove, a AB helix of Cε3 and, a region lying above said AB helix of Cε3.
20.     An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding the polypeptide of Claim 18.

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